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ABSTRACT

This study examined preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance and noted whether preservice teachers' demographic and educational backgrounds would predict their performance. Preservice teachers completed the Survey of Preservice Teachers' Multicultural Teaching Competency, which included questions about knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of human development and learning, adapting instruction for individual needs, multiple instructional strategies, classroom motivation and management skills, communication skills, instructional planning skills, assessment of student learning, professional commitment, and responsibility. They also provided demographic and educational information. Two open-ended questions examined respondents' levels of multicultural education integration. Results indicated that preservice teachers' backgrounds were an effective predictor of higher scores on multicultural teaching performance. The number of multicultural courses preservice teachers took was an effective predictor of a high score on their multicultural teaching performance. There was no correlation between preservice teachers' high scores on multicultural teaching performance and their multicultural education integration levels. (Contains 15 references.) (SM)

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# Are Our Preservice Teachers Ready to Teach in This Culturally Diverse Society? : Examining Preservice Teachers' Self-Assessment on Their Multicultural Teaching Performance

*Conference Paper*

*Round table session will be presented at the National Association for Multicultural Education Conference held in Washington DC from October 30 to Nov3, 2002 entitled "Yes, I know how to implement multicultural education in my curriculum."*

Submitted by

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**Purpose of Study**

"If prospective teachers can be shown how to engage students' cultural strengths while they are still in teacher education programs, as new teachers they will be off to a better start in addressing the needs of the increasingly diverse populations of students they will be asked to serve, and the large outward flow of early career teachers may be stemmed." (Johnson, 1998, p.181-182).

Many educators and researchers have attempted to find ways to better prepare preservice teachers for this culturally diverse society. Research has focused on how preservice teachers can have a better understanding of multiculturalism by examining types of multicultural courses, students' prior experiences, or intervention programs, etc. However, few of the studies conducted have addressed preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance. It is in vague how preservice teachers perform multicultural teaching in their classrooms. For that reason, this study examined preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance and it further examined if preservice teachers' demographic and educational backgrounds predicted their multicultural teaching performance. Research questions issued in this study are as follows:

Did preservice teachers' demographic and educational backgrounds predict preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance?

Did preservice teachers' higher scores on multicultural teaching performance relate to high levels of multicultural content integration?

## Theoretical Framework & Perspectives

Much of the available empirical research data has revealed that children began to notice differences among people and then start constructing classificatory and evaluative categories as early as 2 years of age. For instance, young children easily recognize different types of disabilities, racial differences, and physical differences (Alejandro-Wright, 1985; Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C Task Force, 1989; Katz, 1982). Societal stereotyping and bias could occur at the same time children begin to recognize human physical differences. Due to the increasing diversity in U.S society, children can be expected to experience and see more people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Responding to these social changes, teacher preparation programs need to consider and determine how their preservice teachers would be better prepared to teach students in a diverse society. Teachers need to acknowledge multiculturalism and to know how to provide a culturally responsive education to children that can lead children's high achievement and better performance at schools (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

As one of the many educational reform movements, teacher preparation programs have integrated multicultural education courses and performance based assessment in their programs (Sleeter, 2001). Currently forty one states in the United States, plus the District of Columbia, require diversity preparation for teachers or preservice teachers. More than 30 states are using INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) standards to assess preservice teachers' teaching performance.

However, some educators have criticized the fact that preservice teachers still have a limited perspective on multicultural teaching (Banks, 1999; Melnick & Zeichner, 1998). Novice teachers usually implement multicultural education in their classroom by

following either the contribution or the additive approach, both of which are defined as an inappropriate approach. According to Banks (1993), "the contribution approach mainly emphasizes heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements, and the additive approach focuses on content, concepts, themes, and perspectives added to the curriculum without changing its structure" (Banks, 1993, p.233). The use of these types of approaches toward multicultural education could give students stereotyped concepts of people from diverse backgrounds (Sleeter, 2001). Therefore, Banks (1993) recommended the transformation and the social action approach as desirable approaches. He stated, "the transformation approach involves the change of the curriculum structure to enable to students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse, ethnic, and cultural group…the social action approach is that students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them" (Banks, 1993, p.233).

We believe that it is important for preservice teachers to perform multicultural teaching in their classroom, but it is more important to implement multicultural education with high quality. It is not the quantity of multicultural content that is important, but the quality, as well.

## Methodology

### Procedures

The *Survey of Preservice Teachers' Multicultural Teaching Competency* (Liu, 2000) was adapted in this study. It is designed to assess preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance outcomes using ten INTASC principles: knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of human development and learning, adapting instruction for

individual needs, multiple instructional strategies, classroom motivation and management skills, communication skills, instructional planning skills, assessment of student learning, professional commitment, and responsibility (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2000). It basically measures preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance with quantity-based. For the specific purpose of the study, two open questions were included to the survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was composed of three parts: 1) preservice teachers' demographic and educational information related to age, gender, ethnicity/race, hometown population, number of multicultural courses completed, and academic major; 2) 20 statements with a five-point Likert rating scale with each point labeled, and strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree(5). These 20 statements aimed to assess preservice teachers' multicultural teaching perfcrmance; and 3) Two open question items those participants responded in a descriptive way were included to determine preservice teachers' levels of their multicultural education integration (i.e. How do you implement multicultural education contents into your curriculum. Please, include specific examples as many as you can; describe one multicultural lesson you have conducted at your classroom).

Group administration was conducted during meetings for student teachers' seminar. A mail survey was also administered to those were not able to attend on the meetings. Survey questionnaire included a statement to ensure participant anonymity. Either supervising teachers of preserivce teachers or the researchers distributed the survey questionnaires and explained to preservice teachers that the questionnaire wasn't related to any formal evaluation on their teaching performance.

Subjects

Ninety-one student teachers were selected as subjects who were teaching in either a public or primary school in 1999 (n=47) and in 2000 (n=44). Subjects were enrolled as students through the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at Indiana State University.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from the survey were analyzed by overall mean scores of preservice teachers' self-assessments on their multicultural teaching competency performances. The number rated in each 5 point Likert scale was associated to the same number of performance scores ranged from 1 to 5. To determine higher scores on preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance, the researcher devised scoring system referring scores more than 4 to high score of multicultural performance, scores 3 to average score, and scores less than 2 to low score on preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance.

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine if preservice teachers' demographic and educational backgrounds (age, gender, ethnicity/race, hometown population, number of completed multicultural courses, and academic major) predicted higher scores on multicultural teaching performance.

Open-ended questions were analyzed in a qualitative way referring to Seidel & Kelle (1995)'s qualitative data analysis procedures. Researchers separately listed all responses from the data and categorized them to four different levels of multicultural teaching implementation that Banks (1993) identified--the contribution, additive, transformative,

and social action approach. Once researchers independently categorized preservice teachers' responses to each multicultural education integration levels, they identified either higher levels (transformation/ social action approach) or lower levels (contribution/ additive approach) of multicultural education integration levels.

As Banks(1993) reported, either categorized to transformation or social action approach was regarded as a high level of multicultural content integration levels, the contribution or additive approach was recorded as a lower level of multicultural content integration. Finally, researchers identified higher and lower levels of multicultural education integration from preservice teachers' responses and 92 percent of agreement was shown between researchers.

Spearman was conducted to examine the relationship between levels of multicultural content integration (contribution or additive approach: lower level; transformation or social action approach: higher level) and three categories of preservice teachers' scores of multicultural teaching performance (1 or 2: low score; 3: average; 4 or 5: high score).

## Results

Overall mean scores of preservice teachers' self-assessment showed more than average scores (M=3.79, SD= .68) referring to the scoring system (1-2: low score, 3: average and 4-5: high score). Results revealed 59 percent of preservice teachers demonstrated average score (n=54) and 41 percent of preservice teachers (n=37) demonstrated high score on their self-assessment of multicultural teaching performance. There was no data reported in the category of low score of preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance.

To decide effective predictors for preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance, a multiple regression analysis was administered. The multiple regression analysis indicated preservice teachers' backgrounds were an effective predictor for higher scores of preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance. Preservice teachers demographic and educational variables accounted for 4 percent of the variance and those were significant predictors for their higher scores of multicultural teaching performance, $F(6, 84)= 3.58$, $p< .01$. The number of multicultural courses preservice teachers took was a significant predictor but their age, gender, ethnicity/race, hometown population, and academic major didn't effectively predict the higher scores of preservice teachers' multicultural teaching performance.

The correlation between preservice teachers' high scores of multicultural teaching performance and multicultural education integration levels was examined using Spearman analysis. Result revealed non-significant relation between two variables, $rs = -.11$, n.s.

## Educational Implications of the Study

The results of the data proposed that the number of multicultural courses preservice teachers took was an effective predictor of a high score of their multicultural teaching performance. It duplicated some prior studies educationally implicating significant impacts on preservice teachers from multicultural courses (Ahlquist, 1991; Bennett, Niggle & Stage, 1990). The need for the incorporation of multicultural courses into teacher preparation programs is appeared to be clear in this study.

Researchers expected that preservice teachers with high scores on their multicultural teaching performance would match with high levels of multicultural content integration. However, the data showed there was no correlation found between preservice teachers' high scores of multicultural teaching performance and their multicultural education integration levels. It implies that preservice teachers have integrated multicultural teaching performance in their curriculum but it still asks the question "is it accompanied by quality?". Therefore, educators and teacher trainers need to consider in the aspect of quality education about how preservice teachers implement multicultural education in their classroom with a culturally appropriate manner. At the same time, the data results implied that the development of an appropriate assessment tool to evaluate the quality of preservice teachers' multicultural education integration is timely and necessary.

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